

LEDBURY TOWN

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held in The Community Hall, Ledbury on Thursday 30th April 2015

PRESENT: The Town Mayor, R Barnes, Chairman
Councillors P L Bettington A Bradford
A Conway A Crowe
K Francis C Jupp
M Eager E Harvey
C Ridler J Roberts
T Widdows R Yeoman - Deputy Mayor
Approx. 70 members of the public

APOLOGIES: Cllr P Winter.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th April, 2014, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

The Town Mayor, Councillor R Barnes, welcomed everyone present to the Annual Town Meeting and presented his report on the work of the Council over the past year. A copy of the Town Mayor's report is appended to the Minutes.

3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

3.1 Planning and Economic Development Committee

Councillor Jayne Roberts, Chairman of the Planning & Economic Development Committee, presented her report on the activities of the Planning & Economic Development Committee during 2014/15. (Copy lodged with the Minutes and available on the Town Council website)

There were no questions on the report from members of the public

3.2 Environment and Leisure Committee

Councillor Martin Eager Chairman of the Environment & Leisure Committee, presented his report on the Committee's activities during 2014/15. (Copy lodged with the Minutes and available on the Town Council website)

There were no questions on the report from members of the public

3.3 Finance and General Purposes Committee

Councillor Terry Widdows, Vice Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee read out a report on behalf of the Committee Chairman, Cllr Paul Winter outlining the work undertaken by the Committee during 2014/15. (Copy lodged with the Minutes and available on the Town Council website)

Copies of the Town Council's estimated expenditure for 2014/15 and the budget for 2015/16, were made available to the meeting.

There were no questions on the report from members of the public

4. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS OF LEDBURY PARISH

The Mayor invited residents to discuss issues and concerns within the parish.

The following topics were discussed:

1. Portas Consolation Grant

Questions were asked about how the £10,000 grant received in 2013 for town regeneration had been disbursed and how monies had been applied for. Councillor Widdows advised that the funds were being held in the Town Council reserves for safekeeping until allocated by the Portas Bid Team. Councillor Harvey explained that 50% of the grant would be used to support the youth aspect of the bid i.e. a drop-in cafe and a skills swapshop. The remainder would be opened up to bids and suggestions from members of the community. Application forms would be available after the May elections.

It was queried why the youth centre (currently closed), could not be used for the youth cafe and other community uses. Cllr Harvey replied that the building, owned by Herefordshire Council, did not meet the standards required by law for use as a community building.

A local resident expressed astonishment that the Portas funds had not been allocated and asked whether there was a deadline for the money to be spent. Cllr Harvey responded that there was no deadline and that the delay was in getting some traction with a youth project.

2. Town Plan and Neighbourhood Plan

A local resident spoke at length about her concerns over the Town and Neighbourhood Plans. She said that both Plans were taking far too long to complete thereby leaving the town open to predatory developers. The same resident then asked questions regarding: whether the Deputy Mayor had correctly declared an interest in the planning application for housing on land to the rear of The Full Pitcher; the evaluation and approval process for the selection of the consultants working on the Town's Neighbourhood Plan; payment for additional work on the Neighbourhood Plan carried out by the consultants.

The Town Mayor advised that the Neighbourhood Plan had experienced some delays but the group was working towards the next public consultation and that all Minutes were available as a public record.

Cllr Harvey gave an update on the progress of the Town Plan advising that it was hoped that the document would be adopted at the first Town Council meeting in the autumn.

The Mayor confirmed that The Deputy Mayor had at all times appropriately declared an interest in the aforementioned planning application and had left the room during any discussion. The Deputy Mayor totally refuted any allegations of wrong-doing in respect of his involvement in the planning application as Chairman of Ledbury Cricket Club and confirmed that it was in this capacity that he had attended the planning meeting at Herefordshire Council.

A local resident asked whether spend on the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was within budget and whether it was a mistake that the Deputy Mayor had been listed as the applicant's agent in respect of the planning application at the Full Pitcher site.

Mr Bills Geddes of the Ledbury Reporter confirmed that Herefordshire Council had provided a statement to the paper confirming that Cllr Yeoman being listed as the agent's applicant in the agenda had in fact, been a mistake.

The Town Mayor confirmed that there were sufficient funds available to cover planned expenditure and that additional grant funding was being sought.

In response to an earlier question posed regarding the selection of the consultants, a local resident and member of the interview panel confirmed that a rigorous and thorough process had been followed.

Cllr J Roberts spoke about providing jobs and housing for young people in Ledbury and urged people to come forward to help with the Town and Neighbourhood Plans.

3. General

The Town Mayor was asked why he had not attended the funeral of CSO Heather Mika. He replied that had he been aware, he most certainly would have attended.

A Ledbury resident commented that she often received wonderful comments about the town from visitors and she felt it was the best place in the world to live.

7. DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS AWARDS 2015

The Town Mayor revealed the winners of the Distinguished Citizens Awards for 2015 and invited Cllrs Keith Francis and Allen Conway to speak about their achievements.

The Town Mayor then presented awards to:

- Mrs Liz Wreford for outstanding work in the Community, particularly with The Food Bank.
- Mr Andy Ward for outstanding work in the community.

The Town Mayor thanked everybody for attending and closed the meeting at 8:58pm.

Signed..... Date

Town Mayor